

## #1: The Abduction of Persephone

Persephone was the daughter of Demeter and Zeus. Persephone was picking flowers one day when Hades saw her. He was so captivated by her beauty that he took her by force to the underworld.

Demeter, goddess of the harvest and fertility searched for her daughter when Persephone went missing. Once she realized Persephone was taken to the underworld, she protested the abduction by stopping her work with the crops. Before this time, food in Greece was always plentiful, but now crops failed and food was scarce. Zeus and the other gods tried to convince Demeter to lift her curse on the land, but she would not until her daughter was released.

Zeus then sent Hermes to Hades urging him to release Persephone. Hades understood this as a demand that he needed to follow. Before releasing her, Hades had her eat seeds of the pomegranate. Because she ate fruit from the underworld she was now tied to the underworld and to Hades.

Zeus was forced to make a compromise between Demeter and Hades in their claims to Persephone. He arranged a plan for Persephone to spend four months with Hades as his queen, one for every seed of the pomegranate she had eaten. The other eight months she would return to her mother. Demeter continued to allow the crops to fail when Persephone was with Hades. This myth of Persephone was used by the Greeks to explain the cycle of fertility in nature.

### *As the story goes ....*

Zeus had three sisters. Hera, his wife and sister, was the goddess of marriage and the queen of all the gods. Hestia, another of his sisters, was a much loved goddess happy was enjoying the company of her daughter, Persephone.

Persephone had grown into a beautiful young woman, with a smile for everyone. One day, while picking flowers in the fields, Hades, her uncle, the god of the underworld, noticed her. Hades was normally a gloomy fellow. But Persephone's beauty had dazzled him. He fell in love instantly. Quickly, before anyone could



## #2: Medusa

The gorgon, in Greek mythology, is a female monster, or most commonly known as a Gorgo. These creatures were favorite subjects in art, being horrific, yet pungently humorous at the same time. The most famous of the Gorgons was Medusa.

A Gorgon head was most feared, as evidenced in the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus fears a Gorgon head might confront him if he stayed too close to Hades. The fear people had of the Gorgo was based on early poetry depicting these female creatures as furiously spirited with serpents writhing on their heads and piercing eyes that could turn a mortal to stone.

The three Gorgon sisters were daughters of ancient Sea Gods, Ceto and Phorcys. Two, Stheno and Eluryah were immortal, but the third, Medusa was not. She had been a female of absolute beauty, mostly her long, silky hair. She bragged at being more beautiful than the Goddess Athena, and one day, while in her temple, she was ravished by the Sea God Neptune. Athena was outraged by this and turned Medusa into the Gorgon she became famous for being. She turned her beautiful hair into snakes and let it be that she could no longer see the handsome men who came to court her, as they would instantly be turned to stone if they looked into her eyes.

Perseus, in trying to rescue his mother Danae from King Polydectes, was challenged to retrieve the head of Medusa. He was able to do so with the help of Athena and Hermes. Perseus was given a shield of reflection and a curved sword to remove her head. The blood of a Gorgon was said to be all powerful. It could be a lethal poison or hold magical powers, as it was used to grant Erichthonius the power to reanimate the dead. When Medusa was dying, she sprang forth from her blood the winged horse Pegasus and the giant Chrysaor, who later became the King of Iberia. While fleeing the other two Gorgons, Perseus used the helmet of Hermes which made him invisible and allowed him to escape unharmed.

Ovid and other poets told of the beauty of Medusa before she took on the characteristics of the Gorgon. In fact, Medusa was a very likable character, until her transformation. She bragged of her beauty but she was sought after by many suitors. The wrath of Athena was typical of th

The Gorgon has been depicted in artwork throughout archaic Greece. Shields bore a Medusa head in order to fight off evil spirits. Doorways had Gorgon plaques above the archways to prevent evil from entering the homes. The Gorgon face, or gorgoneion, is similar to many other cultures' icons to ward off the spirits.

### #3: Theseus and the Minotaur

Once upon a time, a long time ago, there lived a king named Minos. King Minos lived on a lovely **island called Crete**. King Minos had a powerful navy, a beautiful daughter, and a really big palace. Still, now and then, King Minos grew bored. Whenever King Minos was bored, he took his navy and attacked Athens, a town on the other side of the sea.

In desperation, the king of Athens offered King Minos a deal. If Minos would leave Athens alone, Athens would send seven Athenian boys and seven Athenian girls to Crete every nine years to be eaten by the Minotaur.

The Minotaur was a horrible monster that lived in the center of a huge maze on the island of Crete. King Minos loved that old monster. He did like to give his monster a treat now and then. He knew his people would prefer he fed his monster Athenian children rather than ... well, after thinking it over, King Minos took the deal.

Nine years passed swiftly. It was just about time for Athens to send seven boys and seven girls to Crete to be eaten by the Minotaur. Everyone in Athens was crying.

eyes narrowed thoughtfully. Late that night, she wrote Prince Theseus a note and slipped it under his bedroom door.

*Dear Theseus (Ariadne wrote)*

*I am a beautiful princess, as you probably noticed the minute you saw me. I am also a very bored princess. Without my help, the Minotaur will surely gobble you up. I know a trick or two that will save your life. If I help you kill the monster, you must promise to take me away from this tiny island so that others can admire my beauty. If interested in this deal, meet me by the gate to the Labyrinth in one hour.*

*Yours very truly,  
Princess Ariadne*

Prince Theseus slipped out of the palace and waited patiently by the gate. Princess Ariadne finally showed up. In her hands, she carried a sword and a ball of string.

Ariadne gave the sword and the ball of string to Prince Theseus. "Hide these inside the entrance to the maze. Tomorrow, when you and the other children from Athens enter the Labyrinth, wait until the gate is closed, then tie the string to the door. Unroll it as you move through the maze. That way, you can find your way back again. The sword, well, you know what to do with the sword," she laughed.

Theseus thanked the princess for her kindness.

"Don't forget, now," she cautioned Theseus. "You must take me with you so that all the people can marvel at my beauty. A deal is a deal."

The next morning, the Athenian children, including Prince Theseus, were shoved into the maze. The door was locked firmly behind them. Following Ariadne's directions, Theseus tied one end of the string to the door. He told the children to stay by the door. Their job was to make sure the string stayed tied so that Theseus could find his way back. Theseus entered the maze alone.

He found his way to the center of the maze. Using the sword Ariadne had given him, Theseus killed the monstrous beast. He followed the string back and knocked on the door.



## #4: Pandora's Box

*As the story goes ....*

Two brothers named Epimetheus and Prometheus lived in Ancient Greece. They had upset the gods by giving the gift of fire to humans and now the gods wanted to punish them

The gods created a beautiful woman called Pandora and took her to Prometheus, but he refused to accept her because he knew the gods wanted to take their revenge on him. His brother Epimetheus thought Pandora was so beautiful that she could never cause any harm, so he agreed to marry her.

The couple lived very happily together, until one day the god Mercury arrived, carrying a magnificent box. Mercury wouldn't tell them what the box contained but only that it had to remain sealed forever. He asked the couple if he could leave the box with



Pandora could still hear a voice calling to her from the box, pleading with her to be let out. Epimetheus agreed that nothing inside the box could be worse than the horrors that had already been released, so they opened the lid once more.

All that remained in the box was Hope. It fluttered from the box like a beautiful dragonfly, touching the wounds created by the evil creatures, and healing them. Even though Pandora had released pain and suffering upon the world, she had also allowed Hope to follow them.

**#5:**

But the youth panicked when the nymph flung her arms around his neck. He pushed her away and shouted, "Leave me alone! I'd rather die than let you love me!"

"Love me!" was all poor Echo could say as she watched Narcissus run from her through the woods. "Love me! Love me! Love me!"

Humiliated and filled with sorrow, Echo wandered the mountains until she found a lonely cave to live in.

Then Narcissus took his last breath.

After he died, the water nymphs and wood nymphs searched for his body. But all they found was a magnificently beautiful flower beside the hidden pool where the youth had once yearned for his own reflection. The flower had white petals [

## #6: Eros and Psyche

One day on Mount Olympus, Aphrodite decided she had become fed up with the beauty of Psyche, the maiden. Psyche was very beautiful and was often complimented for her beauty. Aphrodite wanted to set her straight. So she called her son, Eros, to shoot one of his arrows, which poisoned immortal and mortal alike with love, at Psyche, while she was sleeping. "What is the point of shooting an arrow at her when she is asleep?" asked Eros.

"When she wakes up," replied Aphrodite "I will be sure to supply her with someone like the castle dwarf, or maybe a donkey. Yes, that's a possibility."

"That is a cruel trick," said Eros.

"It is meant to be cruel. Now go and obey your mother," replied Aphrodite.

When Eros was above the sleeping Psyche, he took out an arrow and prepared to shoot it. But he accidentally poked himself with the arrow, and all of a sudden Psyche was the most valuable and wonderful thing the earth had ever created. He loved Psyche more than anyone or anything in the world. He flew back to Mount Olympus, leaving Psyche unaffected.

Aphrodite was furious at Eros for not complying with her orders. The fight that followed was one of the worst Olympus, or for that matter, the world, had ever seen. While Eros was sulking, no one fell in love and Aphrodite began to wither. So eventually Aphrodite saw that Eros must have his way. "What is it you wish?" she asked him.

"The girl," replied Eros.

"You shall have her," said Aphrodite.

So Aphrodite had Zephyr, the west wind, come and bring Psyche to Eros. But Eros could not be seen by Psyche for a little while after their marriage. When Psyche's sisters visited her, they convinced Psyche that her invisible husband was a monster. Psyche, curious, brought a candle into her husband's bedchamber and looked at him. It was Eros, the god of love. In her shock, Psyche let a drop of candle wax drip from the candle. Eros awoke with a start and became very angry with Psyche. "Yes, I am love itself, and I cannot live where I am not believed." Then Eros left.

But eventually Eros forgave Psyche and invited her back to live with him, and Psyche was made immortal upon Eros' request. Psyche is now the goddess of the soul, and that is where we get the prefix "psych-", as in psycho, psychology, and psychiatrist.

## **#7: The Trojan Horse**

war? It certainly appeared so! The Trojans dragged the horse inside their city and closed the gates.

Some people wanted to burn the horse, which would have been a sad fate for the Greek soldiers hidden inside. But the Trojan people said, "NO! It's too beautiful! We'll keep it forever as a reminder of our victory!" (The Greeks had counted on that reaction. The Greeks might be famous for their art, but the Trojans were famous for their bragging. The Greeks were sure the Trojans would want to display the magnificent horse. Sure enough, that's exactly what happened, or so legend says.)

That night, while the Trojan people slept soundly, exhausted from their celebrations, the 30 Greek men hidden inside the wooden horse climbed out and opened the gates of Troy and let the Greek army inside. That was the end of Troy.

There is an old saying, one still used today - *Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!* That old saying refers to the legend of the Trojan Horse.





"O fairy," he begged, "take away this horrible golden gift!" In a moment, the beautiful fairy was standing before him.

"Do you still want gold more than anything in the world?" asked the fairy.

"No! no!" cried the King. "I hate it! I hate the very sight of the yellow stuff."

"Very well," said the fairy, "take this pitcher to the spring in the garden and fill it with water. Then sprinkle those things which you have touched and turned -8.2(w)leveh